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SUBJECT: Ambassador and NASA Administrator Attend Launch and Docking for Soyuz 20S Flight; First Meeting of U.S.-Russia Space Cooperation Working Group

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: From September 28 through October 3, NASA Administrator Charles Bolden traveled to Russia and Kazakhstan for the first time as the NASA Administrator to participate in the launch and docking activities for the Soyuz 20S (TMA-16) flight to the International Space Station (ISS). Ambassador Beyrle and Administrator Bolden held their introductory meeting at U.S. Embassy Moscow before the NASA and U.S. Embassy Moscow delegation traveled to the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan to view the launch and to meet with the Russian Federal Space Agency (Roscosmos) Head Anatoly Perminov and other Russian space officials. The first meeting between NASA Administrator Bolden and Roscosmos Head Perminov also served as the inaugural session of the Space Cooperation Working Group (SCWG) under the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission (BPC) announced by Presidents Obama and Medvedev in July 2009. The overall visit and SCWG meeting successfully set the stage for enhanced civil space cooperation between Russia and the United States. End Summary.

Soyuz Launch: The Mission

¶2. (SBU) NASA Administrator Charles Bolden and Ambassador Beyrle participated in the launch and docking activities for the Soyuz 20S (TMA-16) flight to the International Space Station (ISS). Members of the ISS Expedition 21 crew aboard the Soyuz are Roscosmos Soyuz Commander Maxim Suraev and NASA Flight Engineer Jeffrey N. Williams, joined by Roscosmos Space Flight Participant (SFP) Guy Laliberte, the Canadian founder of Cirque du Soleil.

¶3. (SBU) The Soyuz 20S crew joined the ISS Expedition 20 crew already on orbit. The ISS Expedition 20 crew consists of Roscosmos ISS Commander Gennady Padalka and Flight Engineer Roman Romanenko, NASA Flight Engineers Michael Barratt and Nicole P. Stott, Canadian Space Agency Flight Engineer Robert Thirsk and European Space Agency Flight Engineer Frank De Winne. These nine spacefarers will spend 10 days together before the Soyuz 18S returns to Earth with Soyuz Commander Gennady Padalka, Flight Engineer Michael Barratt and Roscosmos SFP Guy Laliberte. With the October 11 departure of the Soyuz 18S, the on-orbit crew becomes Expedition 21, commanded by ESA astronaut Frank De Winne.

NASA Administrator Bolden Meets Ambassador Beyrle

¶4. (SBU) On September 28, NASA Administrator Charles Bolden met with the U.S. Ambassador to Russia, John R. Beyrle, at the NASA Moscow Liaison Office (NMLO) at U.S. Embassy Moscow for an introductory meeting. Ambassador Beyrle was accompanied by Environment, Science and Technology (EST) Counselor Deborah Klepp.

¶5. (SBU) Administrator Bolden shared some of his experiences and impressions as a NASA Astronaut and from his first meeting with the Russians, including his training and his shuttle flight that was the first shuttle mission within the framework of the Shuttle-MIR program. Ambassador Beyrle shared his impressions and experiences with NASA and the Russian government from his current and previous positions at U.S. Embassy Moscow. The Ambassador described the NASA/Roscosmos relationship and the International Space Station (ISS) Program as one of the best examples of U.S.-Russia cooperation. The NASA HQ and Embassy delegations then joined the U.S. Embassy Moscow Marine Security Guard (MSG) Detachment for an informal dinner, which was hosted at the Marine House. Administrator Bolden met with the Marines and related his experiences as a career Marine and as a NASA astronaut.

NASA and U.S. Embassy Moscow Delegation Attend Baikonur Launch

¶6. (SBU) From September 29-30, NASA Administrator Charles Bolden led a delegation to Baikonur, Kazakhstan to participate in the events related to the launch of Soyuz TMA-16. On September 30, at 13:14 Kazakh time, a Soyuz-FG rocket successfully launched Soyuz TMA-16 to the International Space Station (ISS).

¶7. (SBU) While in Baikonur, Administrator Bolden met with his
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Russian counterpart Anatoly Perminov, Head of Federal Space Agency (Roscosmos); his former crewmate and Russian cosmonaut from the STS-60 space shuttle mission, Sergey Krikalev, who now heads the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center; as well as a number of key Russian space officials. The two heads of agencies visited the crew quarters and the cosmonauts' alley at Baikonur on launch day, and they participated in the crew suit-up ceremony, which dates back to the first flight of Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin. Mr. Bolden also visited the launch pad to view the Soyuz vehicle prior to flight, as well as the Soyuz and Progress spacecraft processing facility, the Baikonur Space History Museum, and the historic cottages once used by Yuri Gagarin and Sergey Korolev. The Ambassador accompanied the Administrator for all these activities.

NASA and U.S. Embassy Moscow Delegation Attend TsUP Docking

¶8. (SBU) The NASA delegation and Ambassador Beyrle traveled to the Mission Control Center - Moscow (MCC-M, also known by its Russian acronym TsUP, pronounced "soup") to participate in the Soyuz docking to the ISS. On October 2 at 12:37 Moscow time the Soyuz TMA-16 successfully docked with the ISS. After the docking, the Russian and U.S. officials participated in a joint press conference. After the hatch opening, the officials jointly took part in a live ground to space telecon and congratulated the crew aboard the ISS.

NASA Administrator Inaugurates Space Cooperation Working Group

¶9. (SBU) Between the Soyuz docking to the ISS and hatch opening, NASA Administrator Charles Bolden and the Head of Roscosmos Anatoly Perminov successfully conducted their first official meeting at the Mission Control Center, Moscow. The gathering also represented the first meeting of the Space Cooperation Working Group within the framework of the Bilateral Presidential Commission established by Presidents Obama and Medvedev after the July 2009 summit in Moscow. According to the decision of the two presidents, the respective heads of agencies were designated to co-chair the joint working

group on space cooperation.

¶10. (SBU) At the meeting, the two sides discussed the status of the space programs of both countries and emphasized the successful implementation of the Soyuz launch and docking to the International Space Station. Both sides recognized the successful cooperation in space over the past several decades, from the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project to the International Space Station (ISS) Program, and looked forward to expanding their cooperation in space exploration. Mr. Bolden and Mr. Perminov recognized the nine years of continuous human presence on-board the ISS and discussed their mutual desire to expand cooperation in a number of different areas. The heads also noted their mutual interest in encouraging students in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The two sides also agreed to an agenda of future work activities for further discussion.

¶11. (SBU) The Russian government had previously passed a one-pager to the U.S. government on September 29. While the Russian one-pager proposed the addition of several topics -- including satellite navigation, earth monitoring, space debris, and the legal basis for cooperation -- the delegations agreed at the meeting that these issues did not belong to the SCWG. NASA and Roscosmos subsequently agreed to specific areas for more detailed discussions, including International Space Station utilization and lifetime extension, biomedicine research, and research and technology development for space exploration.

Comment

¶12. (SBU) NASA Administrator Bolden and Ambassador Beyrle both felt that the visit, meetings and discussions were highly successful and productive, as they highlighted over 40 years of U.S.-Russia cooperation in space, as well as over ten years of highly integrated international cooperation and assembly of the ISS. More importantly, it appears that the new relationship established between the NASA Administrator and the Head of the Russian Federal Space Agency (Roscosmos) will strengthen the foundation for

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continued U.S.-Russia cooperation and enhance the opportunity for even broader cooperation in the future. End Comment.

BEYRLE